

III Armistice and Collaboration

Beginning on 10 May 1940 France was invaded by Nazi Germany. The Wehrmacht rapidly conquered France in bypassing the Maginot Line. The French forces were in general retreat and by July 1940 it was apparent that the French had lost. The French prime minister resigned and Marshal Philippe Pétain, a hero of WW I, took over his office. He recognized the French defeat and asked for an armistice with Germany.



On 22 June 1940 the armistice was signed by the French and Germans in a railway car in Compiègne Forest

-- in exactly that car in which the Germans had surrendered and signed their capitulation in 1918.



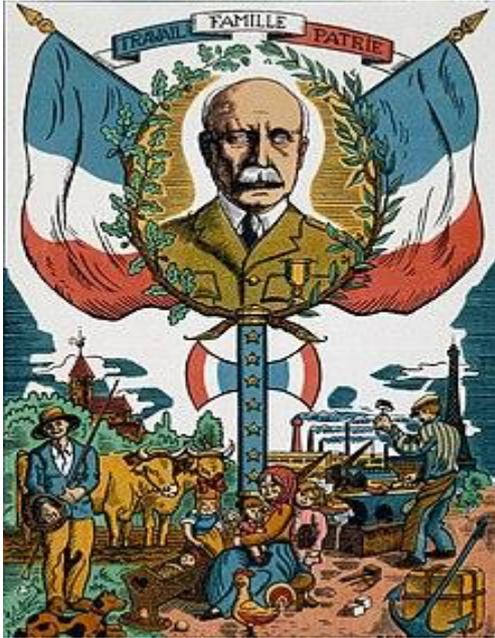
The armistice terms imposed on France were harsh. All occupation costs had to be borne by France. Nearly 2,000,000 Frenchmen were taken prisoners, some of which had to carry out forced labour for the Germans. France had to pay a heavy tribute in gold, food and supplies.



Three-fifth of France north and west of a line through Geneve and Tours were occupied to give the German Navy access to all French Channel and Atlantic ports. The unoccupied zone, the »French State« or »Vichy France«, was governed by Marshal Philippe Pétain at Vichy and remained responsible for the civil administration as well as the French colonies. On 10 July 1940 Pétain was granted essentially dictatorial powers by the National Assembly. On 24 October 1940 Pétain and Hitler shook hands in

Hitler's train and agreed on co-operation between the two states. Six days later Pétain made state collaboration official on the radio.

Pétain established an authoritarian government that reversed liberal politics. His »National Revolution« had



as its motto »Work, Family, Homeland« (Travail, Famille, Patrie), trying to restore a traditional society. The media were controlled and anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism were promoted. On 24 October 1940 the first »Statute on Jews« was passed which excluded Jews from the administration, the military, entertainment, arts, teaching, law and medicine. The police oversaw the confiscation of telephones and radios from Jewish homes and enforced a curfew on Jews. In addition a »French Militia« was formed whose task was to track down resistance fighters, Jews, homosexuals, socialists, communists and so-called undesired elements.

In July 1942, under German orders, the French police organized the »Vel' d'Hiv Roundup« in Paris and arrested 13,152 Jews and 5,082 women and locked them up in the Vélodrome d'Hiver sports centre before transporting them to Drancy internment camp and finally shipping them by rail to Auschwitz to be sent to the gas chambers. Other raids followed in August 1943 in which 7,000 Jews were arrested and from 22 to 24 January 1943 during a raid in Marseille 2,000 Marseillaise people were sent in death trains to the extermination camps.

The German Wehrmacht drafted young French men from annexed Alsace-Lorraine to fight on the Eastern Front in the Soviet Union. Those men called themselves »Malgré Nous« (against our will) because they were forced to join the Wehrmacht.

But there were also members of the »Legion of French Volunteers Against Bolshevism« and the »33rd Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS Charlemagne (1st French)« who were fighting with and for the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front.

